

Asian currencies have resulted in the Hawaii recession.

Unemployment is at 6.5 percent. And by the way, Mr. Speaker, the 6.5 percent may not seem very high to some others in the country who have experienced much greater percentages in times past, but for Hawaii that is a very, very high number.

Tourism last month dropped 14 percent from March a year ago. Costs for the Japanese tourist or businessperson are more than 50 percent higher than they were in 1991. Investment decline has resulted in construction contract receipts falling 40 percent since 1991. Business and individual bankruptcy are at record high levels.

Business, labor, industry, and government in Hawaii are working on solutions but cannot provide direct economic aid to Asian countries or restructure Asian economies. Only Congress can and must do that in conjunction with the IMF.

Current funding proposals have been derailed over unrelated issues, such as abortion. There are adequate vehicles for dealing with those issues, and the leadership should drop them and bring an IMF bill to the House floor immediately.

Economists indicate it will take 1 to 3 years for Asian economies to recover, even with IMF aid. Although there is no quick fix, we must start now, because Hawaii and the U.S. economies are being damaged by inaction. And I stress the U.S. economy in general as well as that of Hawaii in particular, Mr. Speaker.

Knowing the relationship between IMF and America's foreign trade, which includes tourism and the movement of investment capital, President Clinton recently said that IMF funding was something "we owe to the future of this country and to our children." That certainly applies to Hawaii.

That is why I wrote today to the Speaker and Democratic leader, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) urging immediate action. I have the letter here, Mr. Speaker, and I will submit it as part of my remarks.

Threat of economic destabilization remains, and delay is only intensifying the problem. The IMF must be allowed to do its job, including helping restructure the economic systems in Asia which resulted in the need for the multibillion-dollar bailout. But the IMF cannot do its job without the funding necessary to stabilize these economies.

Mr. Speaker, we must not put America's economic well-being at risk by ignoring the Asian financial crisis. We must not put Hawaii's economic well-being at risk by ignoring the Asian financial crisis. I urge that the IMF bill, the International Monetary Fund bill, be brought to the House floor immediately.

Mr. Speaker, the letter I earlier referred to is as follows:

NEIL ABERCROMBIE,
1ST DISTRICT, HAWAII,
May 5, 1997.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
U.S. Capitol Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: On behalf of the people of Hawaii who have been suffering through the toughest economic times in more than half a century, I urge that the funding bill be brought to the House floor expeditiously. I am deeply concerned about the failure of the House of Representatives to act on the \$18 billion in emergency funding for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to deal with the Asian financial crisis.

As you may know, during the last quarter of 1997, a financial crisis swept through several Asian countries. In response, the IMF came up with proposals to strengthen the economies of Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia and, in the process, reduce the threat of destabilization to the rest of Asia and the Pacific Rim. In this regard, it is vital that Congress provide the IMF with the necessary resources to adequately deal with the Asian financial crisis. Failure to enact IMF funding potentially jeopardizes our nation's ability to sustain economic growth. In Hawaii, the effects are more immediate. The Asian financial crisis, combined with the problems of the Japanese economy, has already had a negative economic impact on the state. Continued neglect by Congress will exacerbate this situation and make it more difficult for Hawaii to deal with its greatest economic challenge since statehood.

Since 1991, Hawaii's economy has been stagnant. Since that time, the bankruptcy rate has skyrocketed and our unemployment rate has grown and now ranks among the highest in the nation. The primary reason for Hawaii's economic problems can be attributed to the decline in travel and tourism from Japan and other Asian countries as well as the consequences of direct foreign capital being withdrawn from investment in the state. In March, the number of visitors to Hawaii was down by 40,000 compared to the same time last year. The most dramatic loss was in the number of East-bound visitors from Asia which declined 14 per cent. Equally profound is the impact of the Yen currency devaluation. Today, it costs a Japanese tourist or businessperson 50 percent more to stay in Hawaii than it did in 1991. No sector of Hawaii's economy has been left untouched. Take for instance the construction industry; contract receipts for construction fell in 1997 to \$2.9 billion, down from \$3.2 billion in 1996, continuing into a 40 percent decline since 1991.

Emergency funding for the IMF will not provide a quick fix to the Asian financial crisis. The situation in Asia developed over decades and economists have indicated that the IMF-supervised policy adjustments will take one to three years before they take hold. Yet, passage of the \$18 billion in emergency financing for the IMF funding is a necessary step in resolving the crisis. I fear that inaction by Congress will only intensify the problem.

I understand there are many members of Congress who hold strong views on issues which have become inextricably and unfairly linked to the IMF funding bill. Congress has many legislative vehicles with which to deliberate issues such as the abortion policies of other nations. Holding the IMF funding hostage to unrelated issues is not fair and runs counterproductive to the efforts of all sectors of Hawaii society—business, industry, labor and government—to resolve our economic problems. Although there are steps that all of those parties can and are taking, it is far beyond their authority to address

the need to restructure economies of Asian countries. That is the proper role for the IMF, Congress, and the federal government.

I strongly urge that you and the other members of the Republican leadership take immediate steps to resolve the emergency funding issues for the IMF. We should not put the well-being of our nation's economy at risk by ignoring the Asian financial crisis. Emergency funding for the IMF cannot be held captive to unrelated issues.

Sincerely,

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Member of Congress

SOUTH DAKOTANS SEND MESSAGE OF ZERO TOLERANCE IN WAR ON DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up this evening for just a moment on the discussion that the gentleman from Florida started earlier, having to do with the whole war on drugs.

When we discuss the war on drugs in America today, we hear a lot about the phrase "zero tolerance." I think zero tolerance means different things in different places. What I would like to do today is talk a little bit about the definition of zero tolerance in my home State of South Dakota.

We are fortunate in South Dakota to have a relatively low crime rate compared with other parts of the country. In fact, we never really thought that we had a drug problem. Drugs were something that were dealt with in the metropolitan areas of this country and, frankly, we did not think much about drugs in rural America.

But that is changing, due in part to a new drug called methamphetamine, or "meth," or "crank" for short. In 1997, meth seizures in South Dakota doubled. Oftentimes this drug makes it into the Midwest from Mexico via the interstate. It is becoming a heartland epidemic in neighboring States like Iowa and Missouri as well.

Last year South Dakota joined Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri in being designated as part of the high-intensity drug trafficking area. The drug lends itself to rural areas. Manufacturing methamphetamine is a messy and smelly process. Cooking up meth creates a pungent, easily detectable odor.

As a result, many meth manufacturers choose to set up in rural areas. They find an old building on an abandoned Midwestern farmstead and they are in business. If they have access to an interstate highway, they have a way to ship it out. Once they are in business, the rural nature of our communities make it very difficult to catch the dealers. In fact, it is pretty hard. My colleagues can imagine trying to get an undercover narcotics agent slipped into a town of 300 people, unnoticed.

The close-knit neighborliness, which has so long insulated us in rural areas

from drug problems, is now working against us as we fight this drug. But we are fighting it. In South Dakota, zero tolerance means zero tolerance.

Just yesterday, drug agents in Lincoln County, South Dakota brought drug dogs in to do an unannounced search of cars parked outside a high school. The drug dogs inspected 21 cars. Officers searched 7. Marijuana or drug paraphernalia were found in 5. All five students are charged in either adult or juvenile court. Now, school administrators said they were not notified in advance about the search, and they say if they had been notified, they would have invited the officers inside to search not just cars but lockers, too.

Law enforcement officials in South Dakota tell me that school officials do not just give lip service to the phrase "zero tolerance." They back it by cooperating with and inviting law officers in for random unannounced searches. As a result, school searches have increased from 43 in 1995 to 103 in 1997.

And school officials are not the only ones who support it. Law enforcement officers tell me that students support it as well. The vast majority of kids in America do not want to be offered drugs in the hallways of their schools. The vast majority of kids want to feel safe, secure, and free from peer pressure when they go to their lockers to get their books. Most kids know it is easier to say no if there are no drugs in school to start with, in the first place, to say no to. And most kids are fully behind the zero tolerance policy.

And so are their parents. When South Dakota law enforcement officers bring those dogs into the school, they know they are doing so with the full support of parents, teachers, and students. That allows them to bring meaning back into the phrase "zero tolerance."

We will not achieve zero tolerance unless we have everyone's cooperation and support. Parents say they want drug free schools, but are they prepared to face up to the fact that their child may be the one who is dealing drugs in school? Are they prepared to look for the signs of drug use and take action when they see them? Are they prepared to lead by example?

Less than a week ago a 24-year-old woman, with four children under the age of 7, was arrested for selling methamphetamine to two 17-year-olds, a 16-year-old and a 15-year-old. She was indicted on eight felony drug charges, including distributing methamphetamine to children while raising four children of her own.

Another law enforcement officer said he recently arrested a 15-year-old girl on drug charges. She was buying the drugs from her boyfriend. She was buying them for her mother. These parents are not sending the right message to the children of America. The message of zero tolerance is the message we ought to be sending.

There is a serious cultural breakdown in America today in the message

that we are sending to our young people. Now, students can say they want drug free schools, but are they prepared to stand up to the peer pressure and say no when push comes to shove? Are they prepared to take a stand personally, irrespective and regardless of the consequences?

We are all responsible for ridding our schools and communities of drugs. Parents have to teach kids how to say no. Kids have to put the training to work. And teachers and law enforcement officers have to do everything in their power to keep those drugs from entering our schools in the first place. We need to stop this problem. It is one we have to work together on.

REVISING THE BANKRUPTCY CODE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to turn our attention to an issue that probably has not caught the momentum of the national media or the attention of our constituents back home.

When we first begin to hear about any discussions on revising the bankruptcy code, long yawns begin to come out of those who might want to understand what we are engaged in. Certainly I think when we talk about credit card debt and credit cards and 19 percent, 21 percent, and 30 percent interest rates, most consumers would understand, Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about.

The bankruptcy code and the bankruptcy procedures were used to allow both businesses and consumers to, with dignity, remain in their communities and restructure their debts; in many instances help to keep employees employed, and help to keep people with a roof over their head.

In 1978, the last time we reformed or reviewed or revised the bankruptcy code, we took, Mr. Speaker, some 5 deliberative years. We studied, we assessed, we questioned. Now, unfortunately, as H.R. 3150 moves toward markup in the Committee on the Judiciary, I venture to say that we have looked and given this bill as much attention as we would give a quick hot dog while we are eating it at a baseball game. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that this massive overhaul of the bankruptcy code is too fast, too far, and too soon.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared today to ask the President of the United States to veto this bankruptcy bill, which we expect, as I said, to be before the Committee on the Judiciary next week and, yes, to be before the House in the coming weeks and for the President to sign.

Let me share with my colleagues my concerns. First of all, I think it is important that we in America take credit lightly and sometimes frivolously. Maybe it is because we are bombarded

with letters from credit card companies time after time after time, from the minute we graduate from high school, the time we are in college, to take this card, take that card, use this credit, use that credit. And, of course, if someone says use it, we will. So I do support educating the public about the responsible use of credit.

But there are certain gaping holes in this credit review or the review of the bankruptcy code: one, less than 10 hearings, less than 20 hours of testimony. And, in fact, let me say to those who have been pushing elevating credit card debt over their mortgages, over providing food for the family, over taking care of their children, the problem is, when we had hearings, only 4 percent of all credit card debt is actually defaulted on.

How many of us have had the frequent "hellos" from the harassing calls from credit card companies. I can venture to say these folk get their money. Only 4 percent default. But yet this bill elevates credit card debt above mortgages, above serious responsibilities, like child support.

In an amendment that I offered in committee last week, which was turned back, I offered to protect, in protected income, child support for our children; those bankrupt petitioners who had to pay child support and those bankrupt petitioners who receive child support. Protected income so that the credit card companies would not take the money that they had for their children.

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Was it accepted? No, it was not. And as well, I cannot imagine why tithing and charitable deductions should not be protected income. In the spirit of volunteerism, in the freedom of religion, in protection of religion, why would we not want to protect the bankrupt petitioners from those who believe in tithing and donating, as we would those who want to pay credit card debt?

I simply say that this meager utilization of the process of review gives me shudders as to what kind of bill will come to the floor of the House. Voluminous pages, but with little knowledge; only five hearings, a markup coming up before we had any serious markup in subcommittee. This legislation is moving too quickly.

My objections have been echoed by the National Bankruptcy Conference, the American Conference on Bankruptcy, the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges, the National Association of Chapter 13 Trustees; and 57 of the Nation's leading professors of bankruptcy law, with over 500 years of experience collectively, have said this is moving too fast. If they revise this bankruptcy code, what they could have rather than having the scales of justice, they will have the unequal weights, the debtors down here and the creditors up here.

Mr. Speaker, that is not a fair way to address the working men and women.